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By

WILLIAM SLOANE KENNEDY

THE AMERICAN AUTHOR

JUNE 1903

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CLEWS TO EMERSON'S MYSTIC VERSE.

PREFATORY NOTE.

Of the following studies in Emerson's poetry, as originally printed,* my friends Charles Eliot Norton, William Rounseville Alger, and Charles Molloy, all veteran students of their revered friend's verse, and among the best living interpreters of his thought, wrote me in very flattering terms expressive of their enjoyment in reading them and their approval of the material as accurate and of permanent value. Hence its appearance in this pamphlet form. I have availed myself of Professor Norton's judgment in correcting one or two points in which I was in error. The "Clews" are not intended to be read independently of the poems, but as gloss and commentary for one who has the poems in hand.

W. S. K.

BELMONT, MASS., May 1, 1903.

* In *Poet-love*.

The Society of American Authors is indebted to Mr. William Sloane Kennedy for the entire contents of this number.

CLEWS TO EMERSON'S MYSTIC VERSE.

"When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child Understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room."—SHAKESPEARE.

One would have supposed that the beauty of Emerson's spherulic songs would before this have given them wide vogue among the circles that have recently come into the full enjoyment of his philosophical prose and adopted him into their calendar of saints. Instead of the two or three plain and not over-attractive editions in which his poems are issued it would seem as if before this the demand for them would have been such that they could have been printed on costly paper, filled with delicate engravings, and bound like rarest missals. One trouble seems to be that the numerous poems containing obscure and mystical passages have never been annotated. Probably, too, the omission hitherto to explain a single one of Emerson's mysterious titles has helped to repel people who hate opacity in a poet.

Yet, after all, the age has caught up with Emerson. The old jests about the unintelligibility of Transcendentalism are out of date. The tradition that Emerson is always irritatingly obscure to the general reader has drifted along unchallenged as one of the *cela va sans dire's*. But the fact that thirty-five of his poems—one-third of all—have been issued by his publishers in an excellent educational series for schoolboys and schoolgirls, and that the notes are chiefly illustrative and not the explanation of difficult thought, is proof positive that he is at last one of the popular poets. He is no longer obscure, except in certain of his higher mystic utterances, of which it is the object of these papers to give interpretations. I expressly omit passages which have heretofore anywhere been cleared up.

Fifty years ago Emerson's poetry was a stumbling-block and offence to all but a few. Professor Francis Bowen's attempt to laugh Emerson down (in the *North American Review*, April, 1847) affords one of the most delicious bits of

fun of Transcendental times. It is, of course, a battering-ram of rubber, knocking its author down by the recoil. He patronizes Emerson, girds at him as a freak, a kind of prestidigitator who was trying to win notoriety by startling and surprising people. The funniest part of it all is his solemn bewilderment over the most elementary common-places of the idealistic philosophy. His avalanche of abuse and ridicule was evidently intended as a crusher. He was the proprietor of the *Review* and could beat the big drum as he pleased: he writes in the catch-grin style of the anonymous critic, and counts with good reason on guffaws of approving laughter from the fellows with glue in their heads for brains. At the very time he was writing, Rev. Cyrus A. Bartol, Rev. Orestes A. Brownson, and Rev. Dr. F. H. Hedge were printing warm eulogies of the new poetry as art, though as strait-laced clerics they were scandalized by its heresies in ethics and philosophy. Brownson, it is true, asserted that Emerson was the hierophant to a set of neophytes made up chiefly of "beardless young men and silly maidens with pretty curls," and he and Bartol found the "Threnody" infinitely sad, because technically non-Christian in tone; but Bartol admitted that "every touch of the pencil" in this poem "draws a tear," and that "as a painting of grief it is unrivalled"; while noble Dr. Hedge (the first to welcome Emerson as a poet) had printed in 1845, two years before his verse had appeared in book form at all, such sentences as these: "He carols a lay that is tart and wholesome, and stirs the blood with a keen delight, like a draught of morning air." "To perceive a truth with him is to be on fire with it, is to blaze with it; it bursts from him in flashes of intense illumination. Thought and word hang together like the lightning and the thunder in a summer cloud."

There is one blemish in Emerson's verse that unfortunately has a comic effect,—his too frequent use of rhymes of the eye. And the worst of it is that these cacophonies occasionally haunt one's memory. But one can soon acquire the habit of reading him by the eye and ignoring the false report to the ear. The elevation and extreme beauty of the thought make

a sympathetic reader forget the technique. Emerson's later lyrics have a marvellous melody. Many of his terse epigrams have long been proverbial. The diction is incompressible. The verses have the symmetry of comb-honey, and the serried lines are cells burdened with the nectar of thought. A kind of *ad unguem* finish in them, a signet stamp of the predestined, as if minted in the brain of Brahm. The sweet kernel of the poems is a supreme ethics. They are clusters of edelweiss on Alpine cliffs; breathe also a fine sanity and pure patriotism, and lie close to the heart and to the warm, familiar landscape. The man who does not like Emerson's poetry has not a shred of idealistic philosophy in his soul.

Lowell, in one of his reviews of Emerson, makes the remark that his poems are not lyrical. He must have used the word "lyrical" in its narrowest etymological sense. Emerson's poems on love, as well as his hymns, undoubtedly have the lyrical quality; that is, they express personal emotion and are suited for song or musical accompaniment. Then his philosophical chants constitute what Theodore Watts, in his admirable analytical study of poetry in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, calls "The Great Lyric." They are the outpouring of the soul toward God by a man so possessed with spiritual ideas, his soul so "imbathed with the fragrantcy of heaven," that he sees and feels little besides.

Let me hold up against the light a few of the occult passages of Emerson's lyrical chants, to detect the water-line pattern within.

INITIAL, DÆMONIC, AND CELESTIAL LOVE.

Briefly speaking, "Initial, Dæmonic, and Celestial Love," in Emerson's poem with that title, mean respectively the physical or Cupid love, "whose roses bleach apace"; the haughty, selfish love of mere beauty and intellect; and the love of soul for soul, the high spiritual love, cool and philosophical and godlike. A passage in the "Initial Love," on the omens which Cupid consults,—

"And chance-dropped hints from Nature's sphere
Deeply soothe his anxious ear,"—

is illustrated by a remark in the address on "The Method of Nature" (1841), in which Love is pictured as consulting "every omen in nature with tremulous interest."* And in the following paragraph the "Dæmonic Love" is in part pre-figured: "And what is genius but finer love, a love impersonal, a love of the flower and perfection of things, and a desire to draw a new picture or copy of the same?" The dæmonic love is the fierce passion of an artist for the beautiful; the proud and haughty love of the intellectual and the beautiful and fortunate ones of earth. Emerson, taking up the Platonic or Socratic idea of daimons,—*i. e.*, ministering spirits or guardian angels, holding a place intermediate between gods and men,—attributes to them the origin of the intellectual love. In plain prose and terms of psychology, the daimon realm means simply the ratiocinative or cerebral function. He gives us a hint of this:

"Close, close to men,
Like undulating layer of air,
Right above their heads
The potent plain of Dæmons spreads."

"But God said, I will have a purer gift," a celestial love, based on a trance-vision of the realm of pure being, the realm of Brahm. Those possessing this illuminating love know each other's thought without speech; they live to universal ends, and are never daunted by the vicissitudes of time.

PTOLEMAIC IMAGERY.

In this poem the sublime passage beginning,

"Deep, deep are loving eyes,"

and going on with

"Higher far into the pure realm,"

contains the whole Hindoo and Ptolemaic cosmogonies in a nutshell.

* Mr. Geo. H. Browne, in his Emerson primer, has shown how many passages in Emerson's poetry can be paralleled by corresponding passages in the prose. Sometimes the poet simply lifts a line from his prose into his verse. For example, the closing words of the address on, "Man the Reformer" are "to sow the sun and moon for seeds." In "The Poet" occurs the line "He sowed the sun and moon for seeds."

Speaking of the vision of the spiritual eyes, he says:

“ Their reach shall yet be more profound,
And a vision without bound;
The axis of those eyes sun-clear
Be the axis of the sphere:
So shall the lights ye pour amain
Go, without check or intervals,
Through from the empyrean walls
Unto the same again.”

He is speaking here in terms of the Ptolemaic astronomy; and in intimating that those who perceive the vast love that hold the universe together shall have eyes that pierce, light-swift, from one side to the other of the empyrean, he more directly follows Dante and Milton, who place outside of and ensphering all of the conglobed crystalline shells of the Ptolemaic astronomers the empyreal heaven of luminous flame, where the invisible God dwells. Emerson, in the lines above cited, calls it, indeed, “*the*” sphere, so vast and all-inclusive is it. Dante describes it in the “Convito,” and in the last cantos of the “Paradiso,” which picture the Celestial Rose of the redeemed bathed in refulgent light. Milton says that under the burning wheels of the Son of God

“The steadfast Empyrean shook throughout.”

Now, every sphere or globe is imagined to have an “axis,” or line running from circumference to circumference through the centre, about which it revolves; and Emerson imagines the vision as co-extensive with the empyreal sphere and filling it, so that the axis of the sphere and the axis of the vision may be considered as identical. The supplanting of the Ptolemaic theory of the universe by the Copernican and Newtonian is quite recent. When Emerson was born, the theory of universal gravitation had been established only one hundred and eighteen years; and the literature read by a man like him, who took all knowledge for his province, is full of the old imagery. It is in nearly all our great poets,—Chaucer,

Shakespeare, Milton.* Tennyson is the first eminent poet in whose work no trace of the old Ptolemaic terminology appears. But not to go too far afield, we have here only to note that in Ptolemy's scheme the eight planets of his day (we now count between three and four hundred) each swiftly revolved in a rigid transparent sphere, or crystalline shell, in which it was immovably set, and that through each shell of the concentric whole the motions of the other planets set in the other shells could be discerned. These huge hyaline domes revolving above our heads were as invisible as air, of course; no one had seen them. The fixed stars were thickly imbedded in the ninth shell, or sphere. Over all was the tenth sphere, or *primum mobile*, which, firmly attached to the others, formed a kind of driving-wheel for the whole globular Chinese puzzle, carrying it around once in twenty-four hours. The number of spheres differed with different scholars. Dante's was a nine-sphere system, and his *primum mobile* was the ninth sphere instead of the tenth.

THE WHEEL OF BEING.

Returning to Emerson's "Celestial Love," and reading on,—

"Higher far into the pure realm
Over sun and star,
Over the flickering Dæmon film
Thou must mount for love,"—

you discover that you have left behind and far down the several spheres, and are in what corresponds to the *primum mobile* of the Ptolemaists or the empyrean of Dante, and are

"In a region where the wheel
On which all beings ride
Visibly revolves;
Where the starred eternal worm
Girds the world with bound and term,
Where unlike things are like," etc.

Is this "wheel" the *primum mobile* on which you may be supposed to be looking down from the always immovable em-

* See a study by me of Shakespeare's astronomy in *Post-lore* magazine for July, 1901.

pyrean? We might think so if, knowing Emerson's Oriental studies, we had not our eyes sharpened for Hindoo imagery in his lyric oracles. The whirling of the stars athwart the sky of night early suggested to the Hindoos the wheel-symbol of the universe, their fire-wheel myth. I think I have put my finger on the very passage in the Rig Veda which Emerson had in mind,—*i. e.*, the lines which speak of "the triple-naved everlasting Wheel that nothing can arrest, *on which repose all beings*" ("Night of the Gods," ii. 597). I find, also, in the Smetaswatara Upanishad, that the Universal Soul is spoken of as a wheel. Indeed, it is a frequently used symbol in Brahminical literature, and especially common in Buddhistic books. It was also a symbol of metempsychosis, or the continuous birth of individual souls, and recalls in that aspect of it a curious passage of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," which appears only in the first quarto of nearly half a century ago:

"Eternity lies in bottomless reservoirs; its buckets are
rising forever and ever,
They pour and they pour and they exhale away."

THE "STARRED ETERNAL WORM."

The two lines of Emerson quoted above—

"Where the starred eternal worm
Girds the world with bound and term"—

are unquestionably the most difficult in the whole body of his poetry. In the first place, let us define one or two terms. By "worm" he, of course, means serpent. No reader of Chaucerian or Elizabethan literature needs to be told that "worm" is time and again used as a synonym for "serpent" by writers of those epochs. As for "world," it is probably used in its old sense of "universe," a meaning which survives the time when the Ptolemaic theory was prevalent, and the earth was spoken of as "this center" (as so often in Shakespeare), and "world" and "universe" were synonymous terms, the stars revolving about the earth, and being subordinate to it. But what is "the starred eternal worm"?

Not, apparently, the Midgard Serpent of Norse mythology, which lay at the bottom of the sea, coiled about the Midgard, or earth; and not the constellation of "Ophiucus huge," the serpent of the northern sky; nor Milky Way coiled about the earth. It is in the stupendous serpent-god Sesha of the Hindoos that I find a more probable clew. Sesha is described in H. H. Wilson's translation of the Vishnu Purana (pp. 204-206), which we know Emerson used for his poem "Hama-treya," as a thousand-headed serpent floating on the fathomless sea of immensity; on these heads of Sesha, Vishnu sleeps in the intervals of his creative activity. "Sesha," says the Purana, "bears the entire world, like a diadem, upon his head, and he is the foundation on which the seven Patalas [under regions] rest. His power, his glory, his form, his nature, cannot be described, cannot be comprehended, by the gods themselves." This divinity taught astronomy to the sage Garga. "The thousand jewels in his crests give light to all the regions"; "he shines like the white mountains topped with flame." Coiled about the universe, his head blazing with innumerable lights, this serpent is clearly the "starred eternal worm" Emerson vaguely limns.

As disembodied spirits, then, swift-winged as light, we are sweeping on through the sunny Æon; far down, the little glow-worm lamp of earth recedes with its insect hum about good and evil. We are in a region

"Where good and ill,
And joy and moan,
Melt into one.
Their Past, Present, Future shoot
Triple blossoms from one root;
Substances at base divided
In their summits are united."

In the fourth and fifth of these lines we have, curiously, the exact converse of the Norse idea. In Scandinavian mythology the ash Ygdrasil (the tree of existence) *rises* from *three* fountain-nourished roots which symbolize what was done, what is done, and what will be done; while in Emer-

son there is *one* root to the tree of existence and its three blossoming branches *shoot downward*, so to speak, from the empyrean. So in the Katha Upanishad (from which, as we shall see, Emerson quarried his "Brahma" poem) the sixth "Valli" begins, "It [the world] is like an eternal holy fig-tree, whose root is upwards and whose branches go downward" (*Bibliotheca Indica*). But in the last two lines above quoted Emerson reverses his image, and then it tallies the Norse idea. All four lines simply mean, of course, that to the Absolute Being there is no past, no present, no future, no good, no evil. A little farther on in the poem we have an allusion to Plato's world of perfect types, and a hint that the "gods" have no real existence apart from the Supreme.

This mystic dithyramb closes with two lines which are obscure only to those unread in Emerson's prose :

"The circles of that sea are laws
Which publish and which hide the cause."

A law is an abstract idea or generalization to express the regular succession of any set of phenomena. "Circles," in the Emersonian terminology, mean the eternal laws of progression, the growth of thought and action outward and onward in ever-widening sweep. In the realm of the absolute (he says in the lines we are considering) the methods of development, the mode of manifestation, of the hidden Cause are laws which announce that a cause is there, yet also serve as an Isis veil drawn forever over the Unrevealable.

BRAHMA.

In 1886 I discovered in a volume of the *Bibliotheca Indica* (Calcutta, 1852) the particular translation of the Katha Upanishad used by Emerson in writing his "Brahma." This poem saw the light in the first issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1857. In Vol. XV. No. 41 of the *Bibliotheca* may be read :—

"If the slayer thinks I slay, if the slain thinks I am slain,
then both of them do not know well. It [the soul] does not
slay nor is it slain."

Emerson's stanza reads,—

“ If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep and pass, and turn again.”

In other Upanishads—*e. g.*, the Isa—in the same volume, you will find other sentiments expressed in “Brahma,” and in almost the identical words. Dr. William T. Harris finds the source of “Brahma” in the second chapter of the Bhagavadgita. This work is a dialogue between Krishna and the warrior Arjuna, which embodies, it is true, the doctrines of the Vedic Upanishads written two thousand years previous, and which virtually quotes the passage above given from the Katha Upanishad. But the English translation quoted by Dr. Harris contains few or no words used by Emerson in his poem. It reads: “He who believes that this spirit can kill, and he who thinks that it can be killed, both of these are wrong in judgment.” Nor in any other citations does Dr. Harris show much, if any, closer identity between Emerson's poem and the Bhagavadgita selections than a general resemblance in thought. But listen to what the Calcutta translation says of Self: “It is far beyond what is far and near here.” Emerson: “Far or forgot to me is near.” The Upanishad says: “If Brahma is known to be the nature of every thought, he is comprehended.” Emerson: “I am the doubter and the doubt.” The Upanishad says: “Sitting, it [the soul] goes afar; sleeping, it goes everywhere.” Emerson (in the “Song of Nature”):

“ I rest on the pitch of the torrent,
In slumber I am strong.”

Dr. Harris reminds us, in the volume published by the Concord School of Philosophy, that “the red slayer” is a member of the Kshatriyas, the warrior caste of India; that “the strong gods” of the poem are Indra, Agni, and Yama; and “the sacred seven” are the seven Maharshis, or highest saints.

Nothing could better show how mystified the practical New England business man was (and is) by the metaphysics of "Brahma" than the incident told by Dr. Cyrus A. Bartol (in the *Critic*, 1888) to the effect that, when Emerson's publishers were about to issue his *Selected Poems* in 1876, they asked him to omit "Brahma," because it had excited such ridicule! He firmly insisted that it must be retained, whatever else went by the board. To the Hindoo, or the reader of Hindoo scriptures, "Brahma" is only an elementary primer of metaphysics.

THE SPHINX.

Emerson's "Sphinx" was published first in the *Dial* in 1841. His winged Sphinx of course stands for Nature, and her prototype is not one of the Egyptian sphinxes (which were never winged and were merely symbolical creatures), but the riddle-propounding Sphinx, the winged lion with the face and intelligence of a woman, sent by Hera to ravage the territory of the Thebans. She exists in sculpture to this day, with her thick sensual lips ("The old Sphinx bit her thick lip," says Emerson). That he had in mind as the basis of his metaphor a sculptured form of the Theban Sphinx is shown in a line of the poem,—*"And crouched no more in stone,"*—unless, indeed, we infer that he for a moment forgot, and confused the Theban Sphinx with the famous thick-lipped colossus near the Pyramid of Gizeh. But then this is an androsphinx, or male, while his is female. This cruel mythical monster was wont, it will be remembered, to sit on a hill by the roadside in Theban territory, and as often as the Greeks failed in their attempts to answer her riddle she carried off one of their number and devoured him. The riddle "What animal is at once four-footed, two-footed, and three-footed, and is weakest when it has most feet?" was answered by Œdipus, who replied that it was man, who creeps upon all-fours when an infant and carries a cane when old. When her secret was discovered, the Sphinx flung herself headlong from the hill and perished. This story applies very well to

Nature, who devours her children one by one,—only *her* riddle is forever unanswered. In the poem the drowsy old dame, who has nodded and nodded through the centuries, calls for some one to tell her secret. A poet takes up her challenge, and, setting the slug-horn to his lips, peals a jubilant reply,—that Love working at the centre of things and underneath all is the key. In the dual of wits between the Sphinx and the Poet we are scarcely left in doubt as to which is victorious, for the Sphinx sarcastically remarks that no one has yet told one of her meanings. ("Her secret is untold. Many and many an Ædipus arrives; he has the whole mystery teeming in his brain. Alas! . . . no syllable can he shape on his lips," says Emerson, in "Nature.>"). Having thus delivered herself, she kicks up her heels, and departs with a grin of malicious humor on her face. As she goes, the poet turns his magic tube of Prince Ahmed and sees her metamorphosed into star, cloud, mountain, and wave. We are left to infer that, like her prototype, she gobbled the poet sooner or later. For she had reminded him that instead of answering the question-riddle with his reply of *Love at the centre* he was not competent to reply at all, since he was but a part of her (Nature) and so a part of the riddle-question or mystery itself. If he could only see and really know his physical eye, know that it only belonged to the phenomenal, or illusory, world, he would know that a solution obtained by means of its reports could not be of absolute value. She then gives utterance to what is probably the profoundest expression of pure Kantian idealism ever made in poetry:—

"So take thy quest through nature,
It through thousand natures ply;
Ask on, thou clothed eternity;
Time is the false reply."

The lines sum up all the philosophies: The maya of the Hindoos is here, the Berkeleyan idealism, the Fichtean egoism, and the Spencerian agnosticism. Because that fragment of the Infinite Soul is swathed about with maya, or nature, it cannot understand the Noumenon, the real. Only the Bound-

less, the Causeless, can comprehend itself; the clothed, or embodied, fragments of it cannot do so. Except this bit of philosophical idealism and a statement of the polarity of atoms, there is really nothing obscure, even to a mere tyro in philosophy; a Freshman can see through the tropes that announce that matter and spirit, the objective and the subjective, are one.

“ Ever the Rock of Ages melts
 Into the mineral air,
To be the quarry whence to build
 Thought and its mansions fair.”

Two or three stanzas of “The Sphinx” were amended after the first publication. The line “Rue, myrrh, and cummin for the Sphinx,” was originally “Hemlock and vitriol for the Sphinx,” her muddy eyes to clear. This was a little too rough on the poor old cummer. The words substituted are all carefully chosen, and are names of tonic or stimulating preparations. In the last verse-group but one, for the lines

“ She melted into purple cloud,
 She silvered in the moon,”

one is astonished and amused to read in the form the verse has in the *Dial* the following:—

“ She hopped into the baby’s eyes,
 She hopped into the moon”!

This was one of those quaint caprices and audacious half sportive *jeux d’esprit* with which Emerson as lecturer and poet was wont to startle people. But it had a bathetic effect, and he removed it. The line “To insight profounder” at first read “Profounder, profounder.”

MERLIN.

At the close of the second part of “Merlin” are some wonderful lines, which years ago I tried to interpret. I now see that my interpretation was wrong. The lines are these :—

"Subtle rhymes with ruin rife
Murmur in the house of life,
Sung by the Sisters as they spin ;
In perfect time and measure they
Build and unbuild our echoing clay,
As the two twilights of the day
Fold us music-drunken in."

The "house of life" is not the world, or Nature, as I hastily concluded, but man's body. Compare this stanza from W. R. Alger's *Specimens of Oriental Poetry*:—

"A pilgrim through eternity
In countless births have I been born,
And toiled the Architect to see
Who builds my soul's live house in scorn."

In the first part of "Merlin," Emerson had drawn a picture of the kingly bard who does not give his time chiefly to the petty counting of feet and the jingling of rhymes ; "he shall aye climb for his rhyme." In the second part he shows how, nevertheless, rhyme runs through Nature : everything is paired, leaf with leaf, hand with hand, thought with thought, and,

"Perfect-paired as eagle's wings,
Justice is the rhyme of things."

Then, finally, he adds that, even in our bodies, the waste and repair of the tissues, the building and unbuilding of the clay by the *Parcæ*, or Fates, goes on in a kind of measure and rhyme, a music so rhythmic that you fancy you hear the "echoing" of the atoms as they dance, "Rhyme the pipe, and Time the warder." In the preceding portion of Part II he has already passed in review the macrocosm and shown the universality of rhyme. Then he closes by looking into the microcosm—man—and finds the same music there. As in Prospero's island, earth and air and our very bodies are full of music, and "the two twilights of the day," dawn and dusk, "Fold us music-drunken in."

If any one, by the way, wonder why Merlin is chosen as the type of a poet by Emerson, he must remember that Merlin (or Myrdhinn) figures both as the enchanter of the Arthurian romances and as a Welsh bard. Mr. Emerson's son tells us that his father read the existing fragments of old Myrdhinn, the bard, and enjoyed them.

THE NUN'S ASPIRATION.

I am almost ashamed to say that, until my friend William Rounseville Alger called my attention to Emerson's "Nun's Aspiration," I had wholly missed the marvelous Uranian imagery, the subtle mysticism, of the latter half of that poem, owing, I suppose, to the extreme and deceptive simplicity of the diction and the condensation of thought. (Mr. Alger showed me in MS. three or four quarto pages of an attempted interpretation by a well-known speculative philosopher which I thought a mere darkening of counsel). The Nun, tired of the conditioned life, apostrophizes Time, saluting him as she passes out at the close of mortal life into infinite space,—

"Which mocks thy æons to embrace ;
Æons which tardily unfold
Realm beyond realm,—extent untold ;
No early morn, no evening late,—
Realms self-upheld, disdaining Fate,
Whose shining sons, too great for fame,
Never heard thy weary name ;
Nor lives the tragic bard to say
How drear the part I held in one,
How lame the other limped away."

What a marvelous attempt is this to picture Eternity ! The pied wings of Time droop wearily as they beat the infinite void of space and never reach its bounds. The only obscurity is in the last two lines, where the second person is dropped,—as if the lines were an after thought, almost. But the idea is clear to me. The last line refers to time, the next to the last to space ; that is all.

EXPERIENCE.

There are some cryptic thoughts in Emerson's lines on Experience which emerge from their obscurity when we pass into them certain Röntgen rays from the prose essay to which they were originally prefixed. In my own well-worn pocket edition of the poems I have written over these Delphic verses the key-words, "Mind is King."

"The lords of life, the lords of life,—
I saw them pass,
In their own guise,
Like and unlike,
Portly and grim,—
Use and Surprise,
Surface and Dream,
Succession swift and Spectral Wrong,
Temperament without a tongue,
And the inventor of the game
Omnipresent without name;—
Some to see, some to be guessed,
They marched from east to west:
Little man, least of all,
Among the legs of his guardians tall,
Walked about with puzzled look;
Him by the hand dear Nature took,
Dearest Nature, strong and kind,
Whispered, 'Darling, never mind!
To-morrow they will wear another face,
The founder thou; these are thy race!'"

Emerson, from his tripod, gives us here a kind of masque to shadow forth the underlying thought of his knotty and incoherent essay with the same title,—that mind, the soul, is the only real existence, the world of experience only phantasmagorical, illusory; as we look at it through the colored lenses of our moods, we paint it with our own hues; Nature likes to mystify us; we walk as in a dream, souls never getting into

actual contact with their objects. At the close of the essay he sums up as follows: "Illusion, Temperament, Succession, Reality, Subjectiveness,—these are the threads on the loom of time, these are the lords of life." But, although these grave-faced giants lord it over little man, yet by virtue of his soul-identity with the All-soul, and speaking in its name, he can proudly claim to be their creator. Wrong is called "spectral" in the poem because, in Emerson's opinion, evil is only apparent, eventuates in good. "Temperament" is tongueless; it cannot describe itself in words or be described; it colors your life and makes you what you are, gives you your individuality; you inherit it and it gives the fatal limit to your powers. But as in the essay he escapes at the close into moral freedom through the door of the will opening into the Infinite Will, so in the poem he closes with the thought that the Soul may be deemed to be the master even of Temperament, since Temperament is its creature. The idea in the phrase "The inventor of the game Omnipresent without name" is rather obscure, but not unintelligible. The game is, I suppose, the game of life, the game of ghosts, or rather of the one Ghost in multitudinous forms,—the omnipresent Will executing itself in time and space. Tennyson cries, "Do we move ourselves, or are moved by an unseen hand at a game?" Emerson sees and says that we and that which moves us are one organically connected power. In this very essay on Experience he affirms, "I would allow the most to the will of man, but I have set my heart on honesty in this chapter, and I can see nothing at last, in success or failure, than more or less of vital force supplied from the Eternal." But at any rate the inventor and the game are nameless. The living Universe, in its Deianeira-robe of flame, whirls on and on through immensity, the atoms of its body bright a maze of flashing wheels and orbs, "boundless inward in the atom, boundless outward in the whole," self-moving, and on the surface of its cooled atom-globes now masquerading for a million years for sport in fantastic sauroids and ferns, and now flinging its essence into the brain of a Shakespeare or a Plato and weaving on silent loom a bunch of lilies or a sun-

set sky. But what the end, the motive of it all is (and there seems to be one), we know not at all. We call it the game of life. Yet that explains nothing.

The dread "Inventor" of the game is classed by Emerson with the other lords of life, or related to them, in this way, I think: The word "Subjectiveness," in the essay-summary quoted above, seems plainly to tally the word "inventor" in the poem. By subjectivity, in the essay, he means first the seeing things, not as they are in themselves, but as they seem when filtered through our moods. Then he personifies this subjectiveness as one of the lords of life, and in the poem sinks the plummet still deeper, and, identifying the subjective in man with the All-soul and with "Reality," speaks of it as the inventor of the game of life. Considered as a mere terrestrial entity, may this Osiris upstaring in all eyes, this soul, this "Ideal journeying always with us," be regarded as coördinate with the other lords of life,—Use and Surprise, Surface and Dream? Or rather is it not regarded as the "founder" and master of these? Emerson certainly seems in the last line of his verses to coördinate it with the rest. His veiled phantom, the Inventor, appears in the procession with the other powers of nature, and seems in truth to be the Absolute Soul in masque, the Soul in one of its demiurgic manifestations. If so, then the soul of man by virtue of its vital psychic union with *the whole* of the Absolute Soul is lord of this dread Inventor also, as well as of the other powers of life. (Compare the close of the mystic oracle in "Initial Dæmonic, and Celestial Love," beginning "Higher far into the pure realm.")

In making his guardians tall move from east to west, Emerson hints, I suppose, at the fact that the march of intellect has steadily been from Orient to Occident. It is only in our own day that the great trek has ended, and we now stand, with hand over eyes, gazing far over the blue Pacific to the ancestral home whence ages ago we set out.

The phantasmal lords of life of this poem "Experience" were presumably suggested to Emerson by the following lines from Tennyson's "Mystic," published in 1830 (Emerson

imported these early volumets of young Tennyson, and never tired of praising them to his friends):—

“Always there stood before him, night and day,
Of wayward vary-colored circumstance
The imperishable presences serene,
Colossal, without form, or sense, or sound,
Dim shadows but unwaning presences
Four-facèd to four corners of the sky.”

The “silent congregated hours,” “daughters of time, divinely tall,” with “severe and youthful brows,” in this same poem of Tennyson gave Emerson his “daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,” congregated in procession. Tennyson’s mystic, who hears “time flowing in the middle of the night,” recalls Emerson’s “Two Rivers,” in which the living All, the Infinite Soul, is figured as a stream flowing through eternity:—

“I hear the spending of the stream,
Through years, through men, through nature fleet,
Through love and thought, through power and dream.”

WEALTH.

At the close of the poem “Wealth” there is a bit of scientific nature-ethics which is a little obscure. The greater part of the poem is a series of graphic pictures, detailing the process of world-development through the geologic ages down to the advent of man. Suddenly, at the end,—just as at the end of the prose essay on the same subject,—he remembers his manners and makes his bow to the august Soul, kindles a light in the Geissler tube of nature, sets it aglow interiorly with spiritual law:—

“But, though light-headed man forget,
Remembering Matter pays her debt:
Still, through her motes and masses, draw
Electric thrills and ties of Law,
Which bind the strength of Nature wild
To the conscience of a child.”

The logical link connecting this part with the rest has dropped out in the poem, but is clear enough in the essay. The lines mean simply this: that, though man may forget to obey the laws of the universe, Nature never forgets her debt of obedience; she bites and stings the transgressor and caresses and soothes him who obeys. In her own submission to law she has that artlessness and quasi-moral sense that affines her to the moral nature of a child. The "awful victors" and "Eternal Rights" of "Voluntaries" are only "remembering Matter" in another mask: with all their innocent obedience they are themselves terrible executors:—

"They reach no term, they never sleep,
In equal strength through space abide;
Though, feigning dwarfs, they crouch and creep,
The strong they slay, the swift outstride."

GOD IS ALL.

In the following high pantheistic strain the seer chants the old rune that God is all:—

"The living Heaven thy prayers respect,
House at once and architect,
Quarrying man's rejected hours,
Builds therewith eternal towers;
Sole and self-commanded works,
Fears not undermining days,
Grows by decays,
And, by the famous might that lurks
In reaction and recoil,
Makes flame to freeze and ice to boil;
Forging, through swart arms of Offence,
The silver seat of Innocence."

Spiritual Laws.

When the Living Universe builds a house, it builds it out of its own soul substance; while man sleeps and loiters, the Unconscious ceaselessly toils. In the phrase "grows by decays," Emerson embodies, I believe, the law of the conservation of energy. The magazine of divine power is exhaust-

less; does energy sink out of sight here, it is only to reappear yonder; the tree decays, but out of its fertilizing substance new plants may spring up; the coal under the steam boiler of the locomotive is consumed, but the swart goblin has lost no wit of his might: he just slips darkling up into the stream, makes the driving-rods his swift-shuttling arms, and, grasping with his steel fingers the felloes of the wheel, whirls you half a thousand miles over the green bulge of the earth ere set of sun. The mystic Power grows by decays; and also, by "the famous might that lurks in reaction and recoil," reconciles apparent antinomies and opposites, and is the agent that visits evil upon the head of the evil doer and mercy upon the merciful. If a heavy body be rolled up an inclined plane, it acquires potential and kinetic energy just equal to the force expended in getting it there, and in reaction develops such a famous might that, if massive enough, it will knock you down if you stand in its way. If you lift the big pendulum of the clock in the corner, you also confer latent, or reactionary, energy upon it. Only it is of course hyperbolical for the poet to say that reaction is potent enough to actually freeze flame and make ice boil your kettle. That is only one of Emerson's rhetorical Chinese crackers, his startling thaumaturgic way of illustrating his thesis.

The key-thought of the essay "Spiritual Laws," to which the occult lines we are considering were prefixed, is, Be noble; for, if you are not, your face and life will, by the law of reaction and return, publish your lapse. Punishment and reward are fruits that ripen unsuspected in the deeds of men.

MEROPS.

The pertinency and application of many of Emerson's titles are not at once apparent. I am indebted to a private note from Prof. Charles Eliot Norton for the cue to Emerson's "Merops." I had (I believe, erroneously) been trying to connect it with the mythological personage Merops, the putative father of Phaëthon. But it evidently is used in its significance as a common noun, its meaning in Greek being "speaking," "articulate."

ALPHONSO OF CASTILE.

"Alphonso of Castile" is a dramatic monologue containing a whimsical suggestion for compounding a Man out of ordinary weak-timbered manikins by killing nine in ten of them and "stuffing nine brains in one hat." It is put into the mouth of Alphonso, King of Castile, born in 1221, called *El Sabio*, "The Wise." He was a man who suffered much in his life. He wrote a famous code of laws, and first made the Castilian a national language by causing the Bible to be translated into it. Emerson chooses him as the vehicle of his own whimsey about the condensed homunculus chiefly on account of one famous sentence attributed to him: "Had I been present at the creation, I could have given some useful hints for the better ordering of the universe." Emerson, in his rhymed soliloquy, put into Alphonso's mouth, sarcastically twits Nature with her depleted stocks, her run out-strains of lemons, figs, roses, and men. The remedy proposed in the case of man, and outlined above, has the true Emerson-Swift bouquet or race, is colored and veined with a right Shakespearian scorn of the mob.

MITHRIDATES.

"Mithridates" is a monologue put into the mouth of Mithridates the Great, King of Pontus, who is said to have discovered an antidote for poisons which made him poison-proof against his many enemies:

"I cannot spare water or wine,
Tobacco-leaf, or poppy, or rose;
From the earth-poles to the line,
All between that works or grows,
Everything is kin of mine.
Give me agates for my meat;
Give me cantharids to eat;
From air and ocean bring me foods,
From all zones and altitudes."

As late as 1787 "mithridate" was the name for an antidote against poison included in the London pharmacopœia.

In Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour," Kitley, thinking he is poisoned, calls for mithridate and oil. It was composed of many ingredients and given in the form of electuaries. In our modern pharmacopœias we have plenty of antidotes against virulent poisons ; *e. g.*, atropine for the deadly amanita mushroom. And counter-poisons are often used, as the tincture of foxglove for aconite, atropine for morphia, or morphia for belladonna. According to the tradition, Mithridates gradually inured his system to counter-poisons, and became poison-proof. At any rate, Emerson uses him for his metaphor, which, in untropical speech, is this: "I am tired of the namby-pamby and goody-goody; give me things strong and rank; give me evil for a change and a spur."

"Too long shut in strait and few,
Thinly dieted on dew,
I will use the world, and sift it,
To a thousand humors shift it,
As you spin a cherry.
O doleful ghosts and goblins merry !
O all you virtues, methods, mights,
Means, appliances, delights,

Reputed wrongs and braggart rights,
Smug routine, and things allowed,
Minorities, things under cloud !
Hither ! take me, use me, fill me,
Vein and artery, though ye kill me !"

In brief, "I have run the gauntlet of experience, sounded all the depths of passion, joy, woe, evil. I am dipped in Styx, more invulnerable than Siegfried, and strong now to use the world and be used by it." The mood of the poem is the wild longing that sometimes comes over the good man to break loose and have his fling, come what may, cry, *Vive la bagatelle !* or run amuck and tilt at all he meets. It is needless to say that the staid Emerson never carried this mood farther than to smoke a cigar now and then, or take an Adirondack outing. His contemporary, the untrammelled Whitman,

could both preach and practise (within the bounds of reason) the Mithridatic doctrine; and he was a more richly experienced and symmetrical man in consequence.

The last two lines of "Mithridates," as printed from the autograph copy, were,—

"God! I will not be an owl,
But sun me in the Capitol."

These lines Emerson wisely dropped.

FORERUNNERS.

"Forerunners" ("Long I followed happy guides") mean one's brave hopes and ideals of good to come, our dreams and aspirations. The lines

"No speed of mine avails
To hunt upon their shining trails"

Thoreau evidently utilized as text for his well-known fable in *Walden* of the lost hound, bay horse, and turtle-dove.

HERMIONE.

The portrait of Hermione, the patient-sweet wife of Leontes in "The Winter's Tale" of Shakespeare, serves Emerson, in his poem "Hermione," as the model of a perfect wife, and a more acceptable one to this age than Chaucer's abject Griselda. Such a lady as Shakespeare's Hermione, beautiful in person and of rare self-control and virtue, is an adumbration or epitome of the universal beauty. Looking at nature, the American poet finds the features of his Hermione there: "mountains and the misty plains, Her colossal portraiture." I suppose that this sketch, tender and delicately toned as if with a silver point, is autobiographical, and is a shadowing forth of the character of Emerson's first wife, the ethereal-souled Ellen Tucker, who died of consumption after only a year and a half of married life. When her "meteor glances came," he says, he was "hermit vowed to books and gloom," and dwelling alone. In the lines

"The chains of kind
The distant bind;
Deed thou doest she must do,"

he anticipates (does he not?) the telepathy of our days,—kindred minds seeking similar places and thinking like thoughts, although in this case, to be sure, the kindred soul is thought of as merged with the inorganic world,—the winds and waterfalls and twilight nooks.

THE PERSIAN TINGE IN EMERSON.

Search the whole world through, you shall find no predecessor of Emerson the poet. The only verse resembling his in general style is that of the enigmatic "Phoenix and the Turtle," attributed to Shakespeare, and much admired by Emerson :—

" Let the bird of loudest lay,
On the sole Arabian tree,
Herald sad and trumpet be,
To whose sound chaste wings obey."

Emerson's verses have also a slight Persian tinge now and then, caught from his studies of Saadi and Hafiz. In his fine lyric cry "Bacchus," in which he calls for a wine of life, a cup of divine soma or amrita, that shall sinew his brain and exalt all his powers of thought and action to a godlike pitch,—

" Bring me wine, but wine which never grew
In the belly of the grape,

That I intoxicated,
And by the draught assimilated,
May float at pleasure through all natures;

Quickened so, will I unlock
Every crypt of every rock,"—

he unconsciously gave his lines, I think, the outward form of some verses by Hafiz, in which that singer intimates that, give him the right kind of wine, and he can perform wonders as if with Solomon's ring or Jemschid's wine-cup mirror. Emerson himself in one of his early editions gives a spirited verse translation of Hafiz's poem. Mr. William R. Alger (*Specimens of Oriental Poetry*, Boston, 1856) translates Hafiz thus :—

"Bring me wine! By my puissant arm
 The thick net of deceit and of harm
 Which the priests have spread over the world
 Shall be rent and in laughter be hurled.
 Bring me wine! I the earth will subdue.
 Bring me wine! I the heaven will storm through.
 Bring me wine, bring it quick, make no halt!
 To the throne of both worlds will I vault.
 All is in the red streamlet divine.
 Bring me wine! O my host, bring me wine!"

ETIENNE DE LA BOËCE.

"Etienne de la Boëce" gets its title (with Emersonian variations) from the name of one of Montaigne's most intimate friends,—Estienne de la Boëtie. Montaigne tells us about him in chapter xxvii of his *Essays*, affirming that he would have accomplished miracles, had he lived. He died when only thirty-three at Bordeaux (1563). His scholarship was solid, his translations from the Greek excellent. He was so eager to read Greek that he copied whole volumes with his own hand. A French critic says, "*Les qualités que brillèrent en lui imprimaient à toutes a personne un cachet distingué et un charme sévère.*" Yet he seems to have been something of an imitator of his great friend; and it is in this aspect of his life that Emerson regards him, using him, perhaps somewhat unjustly to his powers and developing genius, as the type of a too imitative disciple:—

"I serve you not, if you I follow,
 Shadowlike, o'er hill and hollow;
 Vainly valiant, you have missed
 The manhood that should yours resist."

GUY.

Probably most Americans, if asked to explain the relevancy of the title of Emerson's poem "Guy," would be unable to answer offhand. The verses celebrate the lucky man:—

“The common waters fell
As costly wine into his well.
The zephyr in his garden rolled
From plum-trees vegetable gold.
Stream could not so perversely wind
But corn of Guy’s was there to grind.”

The reference, of course, is to a man well known in England, —Thomas Guy (d. 1724), founder of Guy’s Hospital in London. He was the George Peabody of his day. Beginning life as a bookseller, he made a good deal of money in printing Bibles, but acquired most of his enormous fortune by financial speculations. He was extremely economical; for example, always ate his dinner on his shop counter, first spreading out a newspaper to catch the crumbs. His charities were boundless. To his hospital he gave \$1,000,000; and at his death his will was found to contain an enormous number of special benefactions, including bequests to over ninety cousins. Emerson in his poem compares Guy to Polycrates, who was King of Samos some five hundred years before Christ. He says that Polycrates “chained the sunshine and the breeze”; that is, the very elements seemed to be in his pay. This run of luck was without a break up to his death; his fleet of a hundred ships was the largest then known; he conquered all his enemies, and amassed great treasure. His ally, Amasis, King of Egypt, was so alarmed at his prosperity, fearing the envy of the gods, that he advised him to make some noteworthy sacrifice. The story goes that Polycrates accordingly threw his emerald signet-ring into the sea, but it came back to his kitchens in the belly of a large fish, as in the Arabian Nights story. The fears of Amasis were finally justified; for the Persian satrap Orœtes enticed Polycrates to the mainland, and crucified him.

XENOPHANES.

“Xenophanes” embodies poetically the doctrine of the earnest old Greek agnostic and monist of that name, that God, or the All, is uncreated, immovable, and one,—not immovable in its parts, but as a whole, and just because it is

all. Xenophanes saw the grandeur and incomprehensibility of the universe, he violently opposed what seemed to him the disgraceful polytheism of Homer, and anticipated the modern atomic theory and the doctrine of the unity of life as revealed by the spectroscope and the discovery of the conservation and mutual convertibility of forces. Or, as Emerson puts it in his haunting numbers,—

“By fate, not option, frugal Nature gave
One scent to hyson and to wall-flower,
One sound to pine-groves and to waterfalls,
One aspect to the desert and the lake.
It was her stern necessity.”

HAMATREYA.

The title of the poem “Hamatreya” seems at first to baffle a perfect and indubitable explanation. The word can be found in no English or foreign dictionary that the largest libraries afford. We are indebted, however, to Col. T. W. Higginson (the *Critic*, Feb. 18, 1888) for not only giving us a clue to the title, but for pointing out the portion of the Vishnu Purana (Wilson’s translation, 1840) on which Emerson based his “Earth Song” in “Hamatreya,” and, in fact, got the hint for the whole poem; namely, at the close of Book IV. Maitreya is a disciple of Parasara, who relates to Maitreya the Vishnu Purana. Among other things he tells Maitreya of a chant of the Earth, who said, “When I hear a king sending word to another by his ambassador, ‘This earth is mine: immediately resign your pretensions to it,’ I am moved to violent laughter at first; but it soon subsides in pity for the infatuated fool.” Again, the Purana says, “Earth laughs, as if smiling with autumnal flowers, to behold her kings unable to effect the subjugation of themselves,” which is Emerson’s

“Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys
Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs.”

And again: “These were the verses, Maitreya, which Earth recited, and by listening to which ambition fades away, like snow before the sun.” Here are Emerson’s lines:—

“When I heard the Earth-song,
I was no longer brave;
My avarice cooled
Like lust in the chill of the grave.”

Colonel Higginson suggests that Emerson may also have had in mind, in writing “*Hamatreya*,” Psalm xlix. 11. As he rightly says, the title evidently is meant to give a hint of the Hindoo source of the argument of the poem. It is in line with the uniform custom of Emerson in giving historical catch-words, especially proper names, as his titles. After an exhaustive search through all the Hindoo scriptures, I have reached a conviction which approaches absolute certainty that *Hamatreya* is Emerson’s imperfect recollection of *Maitreya* or that he purposely coined the word. Emerson, it is nearly certain, read the *Vishnu Purana*, translated by H. H. Wilson (a large and costly work), by the copy then in the Harvard Library or the Boston Athenæum, perhaps taking brief notes, but omitting to write down “*Maitreya*.” In his exhaustive index of proper names, appended to the *Vishnu Purana*, Wilson has no such word as *Hamatreya*, nor does it occur anywhere in the book. To clench the argument, Prof. Charles R. Lanman, the well-known Sanskrit scholar of Harvard University, writes me that “*Hamatreya* is not a Sanskrit word.” “The *Atreyas*,” he says, “were the descendants of *Atri*.” “It is an easy mistake to make *Hamatreya* out of *Maitreya*. I really think you will have to assume a simple slip here.”*

CASELLA.

Emerson is not wilfully obscure. But he comes dangerously near to being so in the demand he often makes upon his readers for out-of-the-way knowledge. “*Casella*” is the title of an Emersonian quatrain,—

“Test of the poet is knowledge of love,
For Eros is older than Saturn or Jove.
Never was poet, of late or of yore,
Who was not tremulous with love-lore.”

*Prof. Charles Eliot Norton sends me an expression of his gratitude for my solution of the *Hamatreya* mystery, which he says always puzzled him.

The reference is to Dante's friend Casella ("Casella mio"), whom he meets in Purgatory, and who sweetly sings (as of yore on earth he was wont) a canzone by Dante himself,—*"Amor, che nella mente mi ragiona."* Emerson's favorite poet, Milton, in his sonnet to Henry Lawes, alludes, as Mr. Norton points out, to this friendship:—

"Dante shall give fame leave to set thee higher
Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing
Met in the milder shades of Purgatory."

ΑΔΑΚΡΥΝ ΝΕΜΟΝΤΑΙ ΑΙΩΝΑ.

The title *ἄδάκρυν νεμόνται αἰώνα* is from Pindar, I believe. Emerson took it from the *Dial*, where (July, '43) it appears as the motto to a poem by Charles A. Dana on "Manhood." It means, literally, "They pass a tearless life"; or, very freely rendered, "They live a life of smiles,"—a sentiment explained by the first lines,—

"A new commandment, said the smiling Muse,
I give my darling son, Thou shalt not preach."

RHEA.

Even in so slight a matter as choosing a name for his verses "To Rhea," Emerson's philosophical belief is glimpsed; for Rhea was the mother of gods, and such he believed all women to be. The thought of this remarkable poem, which its author feigns to have received from the thousand chattering tongues of the poplar-tree, is extremely subtle and somewhat difficult to formulate. The analysis is this. If you, a wife, have lost your supremacy in your husband's affections, take a strange and noble revenge, not by hating, but, in a kind of calm altruistic despair, endowing him with all the gifts and blessings at your command. The poem is headed "To Rhea" (Rhea being the wife of the cruel Saturn, who devoured his own children) as to a wife whose husband had merely "drank of Cupid's nectar cup," married her from sex-instinct alone, and then, the "bandages of purple light" fallen from "his eyes," treated her with indifference. But she continues to love him; and, more, the poet gives her the

advice just noted, illustrating by the supposed case of a god loving a mortal maid, and warily knowing that she, with her inferior ideals, can never adequately requite his love, yet nobly endowing her with all gifts and graces, which are the hostages he pawns for freedom from "his thrall." He does this in an altruistic spirit, in order by her to "model newer races" and "carry man to new degrees of power and comeliness." But what thrall? We must walk warily here. In order not to seem to give his verses an autobiographical cast (although the god, the "wise Immortal," of them is really such a type as the seer Emerson himself), he withdraws into dim recesses and speaks in subtlest metaphors. The thrall, I think, is the bondage a lover or husband is in to his beloved, in whom the solecisms and disenchantments of possession have supplanted the poetic illusions of romantic love. The man of supreme wisdom, by the magic of self-sacrifice and boundless profusion of gifts, turns the trap or prison in which nature has caught him into a bower of Eden. By the road of generosity he escapes. He cunningly builds up in her mind gratitude and friendship in place of the lost romanticism. There is in this treatment of love a touch of the cold-blooded philosophy of the Emersonian critique of friendship. But if it is not a marriage of ideal kind which he celebrates, such as that of the Brownings, he at least embodies in his verse the shrewd love-philosophy of the practical-poetical Englishman, united to the average woman for the furtherance of the ends of the species.

Mr. George Browne, in his Emerson primer, thinks that the key-thought of "Rhea" is in these lines from "The World-Soul" about the gods:—

"To him who scorns their charities
Their arms fly open wide."

But the parallelism somewhat halts. For mark: In the one case Napoleon's maxim is embodied, that God is on the side of the strongest battalions. The one who scorns the favoritisms and alms of Heaven, and yet, will he nill he, receives its aid, is really the strong God himself in mask, the noble and

resolute man executing his will in time and space. But in the case supposed in "Rhea," of husband and wife, the ones who scorn love are those not deserving of gifts at all (although Nature finds her account in them), but persons who receive gifts in charity from one altruistically nobler than themselves. It is just this idea of sublime self-sacrifice that gives to "Rhea" its strange subtlety and its uniqueness among poems on love. There is a consolatory under-thought in the palimpsest, too. By his illustration of the god and the mortal maid the poet wishes Rhea to divine that, if wives make moan over husbands' lost love, husbands no less often have reason to lament the cooled affection of wives.

URIEL.

The central idea in "Uriel" is that there is no such thing as evil. This thesis is put into the mouth of Uriel, one of the seven archangels, because he was the "interpreter" of God's will. So Milton says, in the *locus classicus* on Uriel in Book III of "Paradise Lost." He also says he was

"The sharpest-sighted spirit of all in heav'n."

His station was in the all-viewing sun. Uriel, in Milton, tells how, when the universe was yet chaos,

"Or ever the wild Time coined itself
Into calendar months and days,"

he saw the worlds a-forming,—earth, sun, and stars. Emerson (or "Sayd") takes Milton at his word, and leads us back into that dark backward and abysm of time, and lets us overhear a conversation between Uriel and the other seraphs. At his speech "the gods shook," because if there is no sin, if all comes round to good, even a lie, then good-bye gods, hells and heavens, and their punishments. But note that, though the All turns your wrong to good in the end, yet you, an individual, suffer for your wrong-doing.

In a paper in the *Andover Review* for March, 1887, the late Dr. C. C. Everett says that Dr. Hedge suggested to him that "Uriel" probably took its origin in the discussions of the Boston Association of Ministers on the theme (then rife),

"There is no line in nature": all is circular, and by the law of reaction every deed returns upon the doer. At any rate, it was written in 1838, soon after his Divinity School Address. (*Emerson in Concord*, by Edward Emerson.)

TERMINUS.

The god of boundaries in ancient Rome—Terminus—gives his name to the cheeriest of monodies or anchoring songs sung by the gayest of old sailors on the sea of eternity, and at last approaching port. Terminus, like Hermes the Greek god of bounds, was shown in his statues without hands or feet, to indicate that he never moved. Was Emerson a little rusty in his classical lore, or did he boldly and knowingly defy classical verities when he says the divinity came to him "in his fatal rounds"? He seems to have attributed to Terminus patrolling functions like those of his own New England village fence-viewers. Or, rather, speaking in noble and more adequate terms, has he not added to the world's mythologies a new and poetical deity,—the god of the bounds of human life, a kind of avant-courier or Death's dragoman to announce to men their approaching end? "Terminus" was written about 1866, when Emerson was in or near his sixty-third year, and sixteen years before his death.

APPENDIX.

I have in my portfolio a few miscellaneous notes on Emerson's poems, which readers of his may find interesting.

"The Nun's Aspiration" is in form a dramatic monologue; yet the mask is ill adjusted, and the nun has plainly a masculine, Emersonian trick of speech. No nun's religion ever rose into such cold regions of abstract philosophy, nor (needless to say) did a nun ever have a dream of taking the arm of a comet and gliding off through space, as Emerson's transcendental nun does, into the supersolar regions. Tennyson, in his similar poem, "St. Agnes," gives us the real thing in lines of marvelous beauty: his nun breathes pure religion; Emerson's abstraction utters pure transcendental philosophy.

I find that the following poems were first printed in the *Dial*: "The Sphinx" (1840), "To Rhea," "Saadi" (1842), "The Snow-storm" (Jan., 1841), "Ode to Beauty" (Oct., 1843), "Woodnotes" (1840).

The famous "Humblebee" lyric, as first printed in James Freeman Clarke's *Western Literary Messenger*, began with the weak line, "Fine humblebee! fine humblebee!" for which, later, "Burly, dozing humblebee!" was substituted. The following also originally came after the first verse-group:

" Flower-bells,
Honied cells,
These the tents
Which he frequents."

These were dropped; and elsewhere were added the four lines on flowers, beginning "Grass with green flag half-mast high." It is just as well to admit that Emerson, like Shakespeare and all other poets, nodded occasionally. Shakespeare mispronounces Stephano, Romeo, Andronicus, Desdemona, etc. He and his contemporaries pronounce "Epicurean" wrongly, as does Emerson, whose pronunciation "Epicu'rean" in this poem may be matched by cotyl'edon in his "Merlin," Part II, ll. 11 and 12:

" Leaf answers leaf upon the bough,
And match the paired cotyledons,"

The Greek is *Κοτυληδών* (Kot-u-lay'-dōn) and there never has been, nor could be, in the nature of things, any lexicographical authority for cotyl'edon.

"The Rhodora," as published in 1839 in the *Western Literary Messenger*, is minus the following two choice lines that add the *couleur de rose* tint to the "purple petals" and "black water" of the poet's palette:

" Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array."

In place of this felicitous word-picture (which Shakespeare never surpassed), Emerson first printed the following much weaker lines:

" Young Raphael might covet such a school;
The lively show beguiled me from my way."

The newspaper version also has "waters" for "water," "marsh" for "earth," and "Dear, tell them," for "Tell them, dear," in ll. 6, 10, and 11 respectively.

In midsummer of 1858 a party of ten members of the Adirondack Club of Boston put on red or blue flannel shirts, packed up some natural-history tools and material, and with guns and rods in hand traveled up into the Adirondack mountains and camped, each man with a guide, in the virgin forest of evergreens and hard wood:

" Ten scholars, wonted to lie warm and soft
In well-hung chambers daintily bestowed."

To celebrate this "philosophers' camp," as it has been called, Emerson wrote his journal poem, "The Adirondacks." The club was an offshoot of the Boston Saturday Club, of which Emerson was one of the founders and chief lights. The ten campers were: Dr. Jeffries Wyman (President of the Boston Natural History Society and professor at the Agassiz Museum) and Dr. Estes Howe, of Cambridge, as tall of his hands as any man in Illyria (these were the "two doctors"); the benevolent Judge E. Rockwood Hoar, of Concord; James Russell Lowell, the youngest and the leader of the party, with his wallet full of *bons mots*; Louis Agassiz, of the genial face and twinkling eye and French bewraying tongue; the witty and lovable John Holmes, who had a younger brother, Oliver Wendell, not a bit better than he; the artist, W. J. Stillman; A. Binney; and Ralph Waldo Emerson,—wit-crackers, scientists, poets, good fellows all, and justifying their poet's eulogium:

"Wise and polite—and if I drew
Their several portraits you would know
Chaucer had no such worthy crew,
Nor Boccace in Decameron."

Some lists include Samuel G. Howe, the philhellene, and Horatio Woodman, of unfortunate memory. But Mr. F. B. Sanborn, Howe's biographer, writes me that Howe at least was not with them, his health not permitting such an experience. Mr. Emerson modestly calls his poem a "journal"; but it is in form and contents a pastoral idyl, like Tennyson's English pastorals. The campers made their hut with their own hands and roofed it with spruce bark, and they slept in their blankets on beds of evergreen twigs. Jules Marcou, in his excellent *Life of Agassiz*, relates that the gentle Longfellow was invited to go, but refused very emphatically, because Emerson had taken a rifle, and he averred that somebody would get shot! After much solicitation, one morning Agassiz (says his old friend Marcou) was persuaded to fire one shot at a mark; he hit the white and was loudly complimented, but could not be induced to fire again. In fact this was the first and only shot of his life, says Marcou. For this trip Emerson bought a rifle, learned how to shoot, and taught his son, too, but is not known to have hit, or even shot at, any living thing. The chief incident of the jaunt was the news that came to them in the wilds of the successful laying of the first Atlantic cable,—news received with vigorous cheers by these brainy New Englanders.

Emerson's "Voluntaries" is an elegy partly written to stimulate enlistment during the war and partly in memory of Colonel Robert G. Shaw, the brave young martyr who fell on the red ramparts of Fort Wagner. Apart from duty, it was worth so dying to be immortalized by such a poet as Emerson and such a sculptor as St. Gaudens. The title "Voluntaries," says Mrs. Annie Fields, was suggested to Emerson by James T. Fields,

to whom, in 1863, he read the poem, in a chamber of the Parker House in Boston.

Apropos of the tender and pathetic "Threnody," Louisa Alcott tells of going as a girl of eight to Emerson's home to inquire about the health of little Waldo, and how the father answered her knock, his face so worn by watching and changed by grief as to startle her, and said, "Child, he is dead!" and closed the door. Those few words, she said, had in them more pathos for her than the grief of the "Threnody."

The ringing Tyrtean lines of the "Boston Hymn," "God said, I am tired of kings," "My thunderbolt has eyes to see his way home to the mark," etc., were read at a mass meeting in Music Hall on New Year's Day, 1863, after the reading to an enthusiastic cheering audience of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Emerson, as often happened, got his manuscript fumbled and the leaves fell amid the crowd, disconcerting him a good deal; yet one who was present speaks of "the thrill of emphasis he gave to those stern and vivid words as they rang out to the eager crowd:"

"Pay ransom to the owner
And fill the bag to the brim.
Who is the owner? The slave is owner,
And ever was. Pay him."

At first he had been in favor of paying the masters, as Great Britain did, but was brought over to the free emancipation idea as on the whole a just and inevitable war measure.

In "My Garden," the stanza,

"Waters that wash my garden side
Play not in Nature's lawful web;
They heed not moon or solar tide—
Five years elapse from flood to ebb,"

refers to the curious facts connected with the ebb and flow of the waters of Walden Pond, on the high land of which, on the shore opposite to Thoreau's hut, Emerson owned land which he called his "garden." Thoreau gives, in his *Walden*, the facts about the ebb and flow, how the water is often at the highest in a dry summer and at its lowest when neighboring ponds and streams are full.

The poem "Forbearance" ("Hast thou named all the birds without a gun") is a tribute to Emerson's friend, the late J. Elliot Cabot, a man of gentle and retiring life, of sweet nature and scholarly tastes. He was, as is known, Emerson's literary executor.

Emerson's "Good-bye, Proud World," was written, not in Newton, Mass., as has been stated, but under the pines in Canterbury Lane,—now Walnut Ave., near Blue Hill Ave.,—Roxbury, Mass., in 1823, when Emerson was a young man acting as usher (*i. e.*, assistant) in his elder brother

William's school for girls (see Dr. Holmes's *Emerson*, p. 130). The school was kept in their mother's house. Canterbury village was at that time "a picturesque wilderness of savin, barberry bushes, cat-brier and sumach." Ralph Waldo was then eighteen years old, and the lines don't express (say his friends) any cynical dissatisfaction with life, but merely the pleasure felt by a poetical lover of Nature in her peaceful solitudes. But Emerson's readers, by a kind of blind instinct,—not so far wrong after all, it seems to me,—have persisted in assigning this poem to the period of his retirement from the ministry and making it the expression of his feeling at that time.



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